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MAKE MUSIC NEW YORK IN REVIEW

Behind Bars, in Boats or Under a Bridge

One Day, a Thousand Concerts, to Celebrate Summer



Karsten Moran for The New York Times

Amy Garapic, center right, a percussionist and instructor, performs with prisoners in "Rhythm on Rikers." [More Photos »](#)

By CORINNA da FONSECA-WOLLHEIM, JAMES R. OESTREICH, STEVE SMITH and JAMES BARRON
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More than a thousand events at this year's [Make Music New York](#), the daylong, citywide festival celebrating the summer solstice, were open to the public. But one concert took place behind closed doors — as well as iron gates and barbed wire. "Rhythm on Rikers" may be the least publicly visible component of this annual event, but it is also the most socially ambitious, bringing the joyful percussion music of West Africa into the prison on Rikers Island.

Eight inmates participated in a 10-week program of weekly lessons in music theory and drumming. On Friday they performed two concerts for fellow prisoners with their instructors, the percussionists Amy Garapic, Malavika Godbole and Matt Evans, in the gym of the Eric M. Taylor Center, one of the island's jails.

The drum maker [Remo](#) donated a collection of African percussion instruments including djembes, djun djuns, a shekere and a gankogui bell. It was on this double iron bell

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that Mr. Evans tapped out the rhythm of the first song, “Funga Alafia.” Seated in a semicircle, the performers took turns pounding out solos, which the rest of the group then picked up. Attempts to draw the audience into the call-and-response chanting initially produced only a few embarrassed grins.

But the performers beamed and shouted encouragement to one another during a bembé, a complex West African rhythm that is also common in Afro-Cuban music, and a fully improvised number that culminated in a polyrhythmic whirlwind. During an infectiously cheerful kpanlogo, which featured a number of impressive solos, at least a dozen inmates in the audience joined in clapping, rocking and

stomping their feet. **CORINNA da FONSECA-WOLLHEIM**

‘LAKE MUSIC’

Central Park Lake

Make Music New York and [R. Murray Schafer](#), the dean of Canadian composers, would seem to be made for each other. Mr. Schafer, a polymath and environmentalist who turns 80 next month, has developed a specialty in outsize music-theater works intended to be performed outdoors, where the festival performers mostly ply their trade.

With “Lake Music,” presented in collaboration with the [Americas Society](#) at the Central Park Lake on Friday, the festival made a day of Mr. Schafer. The 12 trombones of [TILT Brass](#) opened and closed it with Mr. Schafer’s two-part “Music for Wilderness Lake” (1979): “Dawn” at 7:30 a.m. (happily not at actual sunrise, 5:25-ish), when Central Park could still plausibly impersonate a wilderness, and “Dusk” at 8:15 p.m., when the players had to compete with hugely amplified music nearby. At 5 p.m. [George Steel](#), the general manager and artistic director of the New York City Opera, conducted a large choir in “Credo,” from Mr. Schafer’s musical/theatrical work “Apocalypse” (1977).

The trombone pieces, each about 10 minutes, were performed by three groups of four players, distantly stationed around the southern end of the lake, with coordination left partly to the clock, partly to someone wielding bright flags at the northernmost post. The music consisted mainly of bursts of melody or of burbles, buzzes and whoops exchanged among the groups, although “Dawn” rose to an especially nice moment of massed sonority.

“Credo,” for 12 choirs of 12 singers each, surrounding the audience, six double basses and recorded church bells, was intended not for the outdoors but for a cathedral or a similarly reverberant space. Mr. Steel led the 144 singers (from the Collegiate Chorale, the Manhattan Choral Ensemble, the Pro Arte Chorale and the Taghkanic Chorale), half of them spread on a hillside facing the water, the other half deployed in a dozen or so rowboats hugging the shore, behind Mr. Steel. Most listeners surrounded the performers on shore, though a few pulled up in boats.

Heard from one of those boats, the sound mostly failed to cohere. The layered held tones and the intricate counterpoint (said to outdo even Tallis’s 40-part “Spem in Alium,” though you could only take that on faith) floated off on the breeze except in the strongly repeated invocation “Lord God Is Universe.”

Though not always effective, the performance was certainly game, and you had the feeling that Mr. Schafer would have been the first to salute the experiment amid nature. **JAMES R. OESTREICH**

‘ARCHWAY’

Under the Manhattan Bridge



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Few artists have courted chaos as diligently and scientifically as the percussionist and composer [Eli Keszler](#), whose [performance-installation works](#) incorporate small, motorized beaters that patter and scuff, seemingly of their own accord, against elegant suspensions of amplified piano wire. Friday's event gave Mr. Keszler a chance to make a city landmark a part of the performance.

For "[Archway](#)" — commissioned by [NPR Music](#) and mounted in collaboration with the New York City Department of Transportation, the Dumbo Improvement District, the [PAN ACT Festival](#) and the Internet radio station Q2 — Mr. Keszler and a scissor-lift operator started work at dawn. They fastened wires running from two weighted boxes under a high-vaulted walkway beneath the Manhattan Bridge in Brooklyn's Dumbo to the tops of lampposts across Adams Street and Anchorage Place. More wires stretched from the Anchorage Place lamppost up to the bridge itself.

After assembly and sound checks, Mr. Keszler activated the automated installation at 4 p.m. Arriving an hour later, I heard sounds familiar from [previous encounters](#) with Mr. Keszler's work: complex, overtone-rich howls; juddering metallic twangs; grunts that could have come from a gigantic iron boar.

But the bridge, with its steady automotive din of cars and intermittent subway-train thunder, lent new elements, including haunting sustained moans with an almost choral quality. The piano-wire litany, played through loudspeakers, engulfed an audience seated under the resonant archway, and drew in curious passers-by.

Fascinating as "Archway" was on its own, it also accompanied a first-time collaboration by Mr. Keszler and the ingenious quartet [So Percussion](#). Mustering just after 6:30 p.m. for a roughly 15-minute structured improvisation, the players started with ringing, chiming crotales (antique cymbals), scraped, beaten and stroked with violin bows, then switched to drums, Mr. Keszler's fleet-handed, free-jazz flurries dancing across martial parade-drum cadences. **STEVE SMITH**

'BROKEN RECORD'

Cornelia Street, Greenwich Village

If there were 175 electronic keyboards and each had 61 keys, how many keys were played during "Broken Record" by the composer Jed Distler? Michael Sansonia pulled out his smartphone and did the arithmetic. "That's 10,675," said Mr. Sansonia, a composer and lyricist who took part in the mass performance of the piece on Friday. "Plus his 88," he said, pointing to Mr. Distler's grand piano. "So, 10,763."

The 176 instruments filled most of a narrow block in Greenwich Village, Cornelia Street between Bleecker Street and West Fourth Streets. They were arranged in five groups with section leaders who cued the players — professional musicians, amateurs and a few first-timers. A lumber company truck added some unexpected harmony with a high-pitched beep-beep-beep as it backed into a parking space down the street.

Mr. Distler wandered among the keyboardists when he was not playing, and some players fretted about the open-air acoustics. "I could hear Jed when he played," said Beata Moon, a pianist and composer who performed in a [somewhat smaller mass performance in 2003](#). She said she could hear the group next to hers, but not the others. "Mostly," she said, "I could hear me."

Before they tried their hands at "Broken Record," the group played Pachelbel's "Canon," setting a Guinness World Record as the largest electronic keyboard ensemble. Johanna Hessling, an adjudicator from Guinness, said the performance displaced one by 160 keyboard players in Sri Lanka in December. Yamaha provided the keyboards used on Friday and donated them after the performance to the Department of Education for public

schools in New York City.

Kathleen Hughes, an assistant commissioner of the city's Department of Cultural Affairs, joined in. She said she had given up the piano for the clarinet when she was 13 and had never played an electronic keyboard. "But I held my own," she said. **JAMES BARRON**

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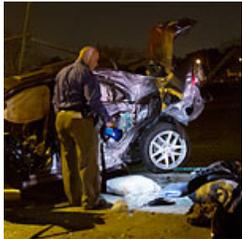
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